

Shall Germany Be Restored to Her Prewar Standing?

There Is an Active Faction in England That Is Advocating This Course

By Frank H. Simonds

UNDERLYING all else in the thesis which is being put forward from one British quarter at the present hour is the argument that the salvation of Europe economically must be found in the restoration of Germany, not within the frontiers fixed at Versailles but within the limits, so far as they can be attained, of 1914. It is in such a work that the "liberals" of whom Maynard Keynes is a conspicuous spokesman are inviting American cooperation, and the fundamental doctrine is that Germany must be preserved.

But is there sufficient warrant for this argument to lead Americans to accept this British doctrine blindly? Is not an examination of history essential, and may not such an examination reveal the fact that to restore to Germany certain things taken by the Treaty of Versailles will inevitably be to restore to Germany exactly the ambitions, the appetites, the "necessities" out of which came the last and most terrible of human conflicts?

Fruit of Robbery

To restore Germany means, if it means anything, to return to Germany certain territories, whose products were an essential circumstance in the German industrial development. But how came Germany certain territories whose gain at the beginning, in 1742 Frederick the Great, by one of the foulest of offenses against right and justice and in repudiation of his own written pledge, attacked Austria and seized Silesia. One portion of Silesia was inhabited by Poles, exactly the district which the Treaty of Versailles now assigns to Poland, subject to a plebiscite.

Thirty years later the same sovereign engineered the first partition of Poland, depriving the Poles of the lower valley of the Vistula, and Frederick's successors continued the spoliation of Poland, acquiring as their share Posen and Danzig, substantially the areas which, under the Treaty of Versailles, are returned to the Poles, although, because the Germans have been successful in agglomerating Danzig, following their forcible seizure of it, that town is placed under the league of nations, despite the fact that it is the single seagate of the Poles.

In 1814, following the first abdication of Napoleon, Prussia took the Saar coal basin, north and east of the Saar River. This territory had not been acquired by France at the expense of any neighbor or through war; it had been peaceably acquired as a result of an arrangement with Austria. After Waterloo, Prussia extended her claims and annexed the balance of the Saar basin, south of the river and including Saarlouis, which was the birthplace of Marshal Ney.

Still After Coal

In 1871, after the Franco-Prussian War, Germany, become the new form of Prussian power, annexed Alsace-Lorraine, thus contemplating the acquisition of the coal districts of Lorraine and at the same time acquiring the vast iron regions north of Metz. In 1914, it is worth recalling, one of the objectives of German policy was the acquisition of the remaining iron districts, just across the French frontier, about Briey, and this was long proclaimed as one of the "war aims" of the Germans; one of the demands of all their peace campaign.

Finally, in 1864, Prussia led Austria into an attack upon Denmark, which resulted in the seizure of Schleswig-Holstein, and in 1866 Prussia attacked Austria, and, after successful war, annexed Schleswig-Holstein, promising to permit the Danes in Schleswig to decide their nationality by plebiscite, but never making good the promise.

Now, the acquisitions of Prussia and Germany in these wars of conquest are precisely the foundations of the economic development of Germany. The coal taken in upper Silesia and in the Saar, the iron taken in Lorraine, the agricultural re-

gions of Posen, the port of Danzig and the control of the commerce of the Vistula have served to supply Germany with the opportunity to transform herself into a great industrial nation. In 1870 her population was no larger than that of France; in 1914 it was almost twice as great.

Stolen Property

But the whole expansion was explicable in terms of stolen property. If France still possessed the Saar and Alsace-Lorraine, if Poland still kept only the regions in which Poles predominated, then Germany would be deprived of precisely those raw materials—the iron and the coal—which were in a large measure responsible for her great expansion.

Moreover, this great expansion was accompanied by the rapid growth of that spirit which produced the war. For two decades Germans complained that their economic development entitled them to territorial increases, they planned attacks upon their neighbors because their own population had expanded so rapidly that new territories were necessary, and they marked out for themselves Belgian and French regions and conceived the possibility of completing the extinction of Polish hopes by taking over Russian Poland.

This same expansion pushed them into acute rivalry with the British. Become a great industrial nation, they of necessity embarked upon foreign commerce, and as they had to produce vastly more manufactured articles than they consumed, to meet their growing deficit in food, they looked with ever-increasing resentment at the immense British colonial empire and the complete mastery of the seas by the British fleet. For it was clear that it lay within British power to shut off their commercial exchanges if war ever came.

Germany Overcrowded

Literally, Germany became an overcrowded nation, living on its manufactures, dependent upon foreign markets, but without power to protect its commerce and ever needing more territorial increase to meet the growing demands of its population, which continued to increase by leaps and bounds. But only because Germany, and Prussia before Germany, had successfully despoiled France and Poland, Austria and Denmark of valuable provinces was she able to engineer this vast economic development. It was founded upon successful robberies of states which, had they possessed the resources taken from them, might have developed similarly within their own frontiers.

Now the Treaty of Versailles has faced the facts of the situation. It has by no means done full justice. It has not restored to Poland all of the regions stolen by the Germans, having regard to the fact that in some the Germans have by means of a brutal policy succeeded in reducing the Polish population, but it has restored much, and the things restored necessarily injure German economic possibilities. If the Poles get the Silesian coal, it will be the Polish factories which will prosper and Poland will have an economic development. No real question has been raised about the return of Alsace-Lorraine to France, together with the iron district, but a mighty protest has been raised over the Saar Valley, yet both were stolen from the French with equal disregard of the wishes of the inhabitants, the difference lying only in the dates of stealing. The one in 1814-15 apparently finds warrant in the fact that it has endured for a century, while that of 1871 is not old enough to be established.

Saar Coal Basin

The question then occurs on the degree to which the world feels it wise or necessary to give the Germans a new opportunity to repeat recent history. Certain British economists would insist upon the return of the Silesian and Saar coal basins, and while they hesitate to urge the return of Alsace-Lorraine

Old Rhyme—New Reason



Who killed cock robin?
"I," said Senator Lodge;
"It was my little doggie!
I killed cock robin!"

Who saw him die?
"I," said the fly;
"It does make me cry!
I saw him die!"

Who'll toll the bell?
"I," said John Bull;
"I'll give it a pull!
I'll toll the bell!"

—From The Passing Show, London.

they suggest a contract on the part of the French to turn over to the Germans enough iron ore to keep the German factories at work, receiving on this condition a commensurate amount of coal.

Disregard Poles

This argument, of course, disregards the desire of the French to replace the Germans in the world steel market, to gain the position which would have been theirs, measurably, but for the German stealing of 1871 and, beyond question, but for the combined stealings of 1814-15 and 1871. As for the Polish industry—and Lodz has vast possibilities and Poland the population for economic expansion—this is set aside and the decision based upon the assertion that the Poles never have been an orderly people.

But, granted that the restoration of Germany on the economic side would solve many contemporary economic problems, what would be the political effect? In any event, the Germans will find themselves with the same dense population, capable of maintaining itself only by foreign commerce, and more completely at the mercy of the British sea power than before the recent war. They will find themselves faced by certain further handicaps growing out of the territorial readjustments, the loss of the Lorraine iron and the Alsatian potash, the loss of Posen, Danzig and the control of the lower Vistula.

If Germany did not, could not, accept the limitations of 1914, how can Germans accept those of 1919? If German economic life is brought back to the old situation of pros-

perity, how can one escape the conviction that German political life will take the old directions? It is nonsense and worse than nonsense to believe that German policy was dictated by insane militarism, which sacrificed the economic life of the country to delusions of political grandeur. The truth is that the German economic expansion developed the militaristic view. The army has for a century and a half been merely the pioneer, preparing the way for Prussian and then for German commercial development.

The proposal to sacrifice Poland and France to Germany so that German industrial life may be reconstituted and the dangers incident to German economic paralysis avoided is based upon a willingness to forget the historical circumstances, both in the German economic development itself and in the recent attack upon the outside world. It refuses to concede the fact that the German war had its origin in German commercial aspirations far more than in German militaristic concepts. The war was fought for world markets by the Germans, for whom the markets had become a matter of life and death.

The Other Side

It is undeniably true that the alternative is unattractive. Germany emerges from the war still a nation of 60,000,000 on a territory reduced from 212,000 square miles to little more than 180,000 square miles and smaller than Spain. But the significant fact is that this population, 50 per cent larger than the population of 1870, now inhabits a region which is not only incapable of providing food for this enormous aggregation of

human beings, but does not contain the minerals out of which can be manufactured products to exchange for food.

In a word, the problem is whether the world shall intervene to return to Germany her lost mineral regions, which were themselves stolen from Germany's neighbors, thereby perpetuating the ancient wrong, or consent to see Germany pass through a long period of agony, for which the single solution must be sought in the migration of millions of Germans. But the question is complicated with other considerations. To restore Germany's lost mineral regions is to do violence to French and Polish possibilities, to deny each the expansion in population which would logically follow the development of their new mineral resources. Moreover, it is to furnish Germany with the resources to maintain a population which has become, by its very size, a menace to all neighboring states.

Will Rule Russia

It is not difficult to perceive that if Germany be restored she will become, in due time, the economic master of middle Europe and the true director of Russia. Around Germany will necessarily gather all the fragmentary creations which replace the Hapsburg empire on the map. But, after all, this spells the realization for the German of the old dream of Mitteleuropa. Master of the middle of Europe, will he not inevitably return to his old demands for the possession of Belgian and Dutch ports, for the control of the north of France, not for military reasons, primarily, but for the far more compelling reasons of international trade and industrial independence? A Germany of 50,000,000, with

an industrial and economic life commensurate with its population and its own resources, the resources found in territory to which the German title is not debatable, could not be a menace to the peace of Europe; it would not have the numbers or the resources to undertake the old struggle for political control, which was itself the preparation for the economic domination. France, with 40,000,000 people, secure in her present frontiers, assured of a great iron and steel expansion, fortified by the ever growing weight of her North African colonies, whose man power would enable her to face Germany on even terms, would be relieved of all the anxieties which have been endured since 1870.

Cause of Defeat

As for Great Britain, can there be any sound basis for the belief that if Germany regains economic strength she will not reacquire the old realization that her economic life is, after all, at the mercy of the British fleet? To-day the Germans superficially condemn France or even the United States, but under the surface every German realizes that the real defeat was that suffered at the hands of the one great commercial rival, Great Britain. Moreover, there will be a steadily increasing recognition of this on the part of the Germans as the facts of the war and the conditions of the war are brought home to them.

Germany would be economically strong, economically the architect of the new organization of Central Europe and of the Russian Empire,

Economic Conditions Are Urged by "Liberals" Led by Maynard Keynes

particularly if the Russian association opens the roads to India and to Egypt. And for this development the British will have themselves to thank if any temporary desire to seek the restoration of trade and the termination of unrest leads them to support Germany's claims for rehabilitation at the expense of the nations who were Britain's allies in the recent struggle.

The German attack upon the Western world in 1914 was chargeable beyond all else to very deep causes resembling, in some measure, the causes of those other German irruptions which ended in the destruction of the Roman Empire and the temporary obscuration of Christian civilization. The German was driven by the necessities incident to overpopulation and underproduction of food. He had literally to conquer or to die; he must acquire new areas and new markets or consent to the reduction of his own population.

Chose War

The German chose war; he chose it deliberately; he prepared for it with a consciousness of its meaning for him, but he did not prepare for it through some mad lust for more military glory or expanded power. New fields and new markets had become a matter of life and death for him, and he used his military weapon to acquire them, with the full consciousness that in the end the sword would merely be the tool employed by the manufacturer to clear the way for his wares and plough new fields to furnish him with foodstuffs.

The notion that Germany was the victim of a military caste and has recovered from its madness is based upon a very superficial examination of the facts of German history, and indeed of all history. But this belief underlies all the present discussion of restoring Germany. One may concede that it is an arguable policy to endeavor by the seizure of purely German lands to compel the German masses to migrate. Justification might be found even for this policy, given the character of the German attack upon her neighbors, but no such question is now under discussion.

At Others' Expense

What is asked of the world, what is specifically asked of the American people, is that under the specious plea of humanity, and under the even more effective menace of alleged anarchy, they aid in the restoration of Germany at the expense of all Germany's neighbors. We are asked to give our countenance to legalizing the stealings of Frederick the Great and all his successors, to dooming the Poles and the French so far as their economic aspirations are concerned, solely because the only visible alternative is the enforced migration of upward of ten millions of Germans and the concomitant decline of Germany as the economic master of the European Continent.

The contemporary passions due to the war will pass away—are, in fact, passing. No sensible person will now echo the cries of the other years about "punishing Germany," since this is only child's talk. It is not a matter of punishing Germany that is before the world. It is purely and simply a question of restoring to Germany the property which she once stole from her neighbors, because she employed this property with extreme skill and turned it to such account that she became the greatest economic state on the Continent.

With Closed Eyes

We are asked to do this without any full appreciation of the fact that the character of this economic expansion was such that it led inevitably to further German attacks upon neighboring states, and in truth compelled the Germans to conquer or to migrate. Thus we are asked to contribute to restoring what were, after all, the conditions out of which the war inevitably resulted. And those who ask it close their eyes and would close ours to everything except the merely superficial circumstances, self-interest, contemporary terror of disorder, the desire to get the war over and forgotten as soon as possible.

In America, more than anywhere else, the specious plea to restore Germany finds ready hearing, because Americans are little familiar with the circumstances of the making of this Germany. The story of the fashion in which for a century and a half the Polish race has suffered every sort of wrong, because for Frederick the Great's scheme of creating a strong Prussia the de-

struction of Poland was a necessary detail, is little appreciated, and protests about Danzig and upper Silesia are heard with sympathetic attention.

Map Shows Stealings

The partition of Germany seen in an act of violence, and every circumstance in the restoration of stolen territory to its rightful owners has similarly been translated to the American public as an act of violence. Yet if one chose to set before himself the map of Europe at the hour when Frederick the Great arrived and compare it with the map of the present hour it would be perceived how extensive are the stealings which have been left in German hands even by the Treaty of Versailles.

Criticize the economic features of the Treaty of Versailles as one may—and on this side the debate is inevitable—the territorial features entitle it to recognition as the fairest of the great settlements which have been made in all European history. From Germany it took Alsace-Lorraine, Posen, West Prussia, Danzig and, conditionally, upper Silesia and the Saar. But each of these sections represented successful plundering in past times, and if each was a foundation stone of contemporary Germany's economic existence it was no less legally and morally the possession of another nation.

If Germany had acquired Long Island by successful intervention in American affairs at the time of the Civil War or of the Spanish-American War the first condition of the Treaty of Versailles, so far as Americans were concerned, would have been the retrocession of the island. Granted that the Germans had colonized it so every last resident of Brooklyn was Teutonic, conceded that the development had been such that Brooklyn had become the greatest of world ports, allowing that the loss of it might have spelled economic prostration for Germany, would any one of these considerations have weighed with Americans seeking to reclaim their own?

Which Shall Suffer?

No one will argue for punitive annexations at German expense, but to-day the question is one of punishing Germany's neighbors by withholding from them what was once their own because Germany, having taken it by force and developed it with skill, now stands in need of its increased yield for her own prosperity, or for her own economic salvation, for that matter, for the greatness of the German necessity does not add to the German claim one single atom. It is for France and for Poland to decide whether the rehabilitation of Germany at their expense is a profitable enterprise for them; it is not for Great Britain or for the United States to insist upon such a rehabilitation.

Even if one should concede, and the concession is by no means warranted, that Germany would make better use of French iron or Polish coal than the French or the Poles, it is hardly a logical argument for turning the iron fields and the coal mines over to Germany. Nor is it an argument in favor of such spoliation to allege that without these Germany may die. Germany will not, of course, die, but even a very great shrinkage in population accompanied by internal suffering and unrest would not be justly prevented at some one else's expense.

Would Mean War Again

I have emphasized what seems to me the moral consideration, because I believe it should be contributing, yet it is not less clear that expediency and principle for once follow the same pathways. It was the German economic system, founded upon forcible annexations, which led to the present World War. To reproduce all of the old conditions in Germany would merely be to reproduce all the old "necessities." German policies were not accidents of Kaiserism or of militarism, they had roots in commercial and economic conditions.

Germany restored is the German peril renewed, because the peril had its origin in perfectly familiar circumstances which have for centuries operated in exactly the same way. To destroy Germany is impossible, but it is for Germany to rebuild, and if the world is to have surcease from the German menace the new German structure will have to be in accordance with German circumstances, not resting upon the insecure bases of stolen territories and intelligent exploitation of what belongs by right to other nations.

(Copyright, 1920, by the McClure Newspaper Syndicate.)